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Exploring Digital Design

Multi-Disciplinary Design Practices

Springer

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Preface

Digital design is an important element of our lives. We live with designed environments filled with designed things: systems, media and all sorts of artefacts. Many of these are digital or partly digital. In order to understand contemporary society and culture it is important to study digital designs and how they are weaved into our daily practices. It is, however, just as important to understand the processes of digital design that bring about these digital elements in our lives. This book: *Exploring Digital Design*, presents a research-oriented view on design, and explores how to analyze design in digital domains. It takes a closer look at the diverse disciplinary sources of the current discourses about digital design, paying special attention to the humanities exploring how they can enrich a design discourse currently dominated by design professionals and philosophers.

This book is based on collaboration between three departments at the University of Oslo: the interdisciplinary research centre InterMedia, the Department of Informatics, and the Department of Media and Communication. The book was initiated as part of a multidisciplinary research network *Competence and Media Convergence (CMC)* at the University of Oslo, bringing together researchers from these departments and also many disciplines to do research on IT in a socio-cultural context. In 2006 a new strategic research initiative on *Digital Design* at the University of Oslo was begun, involving researchers from these three partners. The book has been a major collaborative project for the *Digital Design* initiative, and Professor Ina Wagner, Vienna University of Technology, was engaged as an editor, leading the process of making a book. Our first thanks go to the departments and research initiatives that initiated the book and its projects, in particular to CMC's Trond Eilif Hauge and InterMedia's then centre leader Sten Ludvigsen. Thanks also to The Department of Informatics for funding the finalizing of the book.

The writing of the book has been an exploratory journey. We decided to write one part of the book collaboratively and the decision was taken quite early on; this book should not be 'just' a collection of individual contributions but should present the results of mutual learning. However, we also wanted the book to give space to individual contributions that demonstrate how different approaches can enrich digital design research. The writing together (no surprise) revealed that we represent different understandings of digital design. More importantly, however, is that we have experienced the differences as essential for our ambition to explore and move

our original disciplinary positions toward more open and complex understandings of digital design. The difficulty of opening up to other approaches while not losing your own perspective is not untypical of multidisciplinary projects. We, the authors of this book, have different and mixed academic backgrounds: informatics, information systems, pedagogy, cultural anthropology, discourse analysis, linguistics, semiotics, new media studies and literary theory, among others. Given this diversity, the process of sharing, exploring and establishing a shared experience is by necessity a long-term project.

Collaborating in the making of this book has been full of challenges. The texts went through many iterations, and the process of re-visiting positions, of re-ordering and re-writing arguments, gave rise to discoveries and rich discussions. So did the joint analysis of examples of digital design projects, which are present throughout the book. We are happy to have been involved in this adventure. And we are happy to have had other researchers with us on the journey, researchers that contributed but did not stay throughout the process, in particular Anders Mørch and Synne Skjulstad from InterMedia, and Anne Lise Wullum from Media and Communication Studies. In addition, Ole Smørdal and Anders Kluge from InterMedia and Jens Kaasbøll from Informatics participated in our first discussions. Towards the end, Erik Stolterman, University of Umeå and University of Indiana, and Joan Greenbaum, City University of New York, read through parts of the manuscript and gave valuable comments. Heather Owen gave the text a round of thorough language editing. Christina Mörtberg made the indexing and together with Annelise Harnesk the finishing editing. Our Springer contacts, Rebecca Mowat, Helen Desmond, Beverley Ford, and Natasha Harding, have been extremely supportive and patient. Thank you to all!

October 2009, Oslo
the authors

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